

Archaeological Investigations in the Burnay District of Southeastern Ifugao, Philippines

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ROBERT F. MAHER

UNTIL 1976 ARCHAEOLOGICAL investigations in the Philippines' Ifugao Province were confined to the high valleys of Banaue municipality (Maher 1973, 1975; Fig. 1). This was true of most of the 1976 season as well, with excavations designed to expand on the earlier work done in the Bannawol, Puitan, Amganad, and Nabyun agricultural districts. The intention was to shift operations to the lower valleys in the southeastern part of the province during the latter part of the season. These plans almost went awry when Typhoon Didong, called Olga in the United States, struck the mountains on 21 May. Washing out many kilometers of roads in the lowlands and blocking all of the mountain roads in the province with landslides, the typhoon delayed our shift of location and placed unwelcome pressures of time on conducting the new excavations. In the end, however, due largely to the excellent advance work of my veteran crew chief, Jose Binwag, we were able to accomplish the first part of a three-segment research project planned for the southeastern valleys. The objectives were to conduct excavations at what appear to be the core villages of the important Burnay agricultural district, at Bintacan cave, one of the few natural caves in the province, and at Kiyyangan, the legendary ancestral village of the Ifugao (Fig. 2). During the days left to us by Typhoon Didong only the Burnay district research was attempted in 1976. The other two objectives were held over until 1978.

The name Burnay is apparently one of those errors of the ear which have become so embedded by use in both spoken and written language that they are no longer correctable. The agricultural district it refers to is called Bunne by the Ifugao after the name of a fruit tree (*Antidesma bunius*) which grows abundantly there. The confusion may

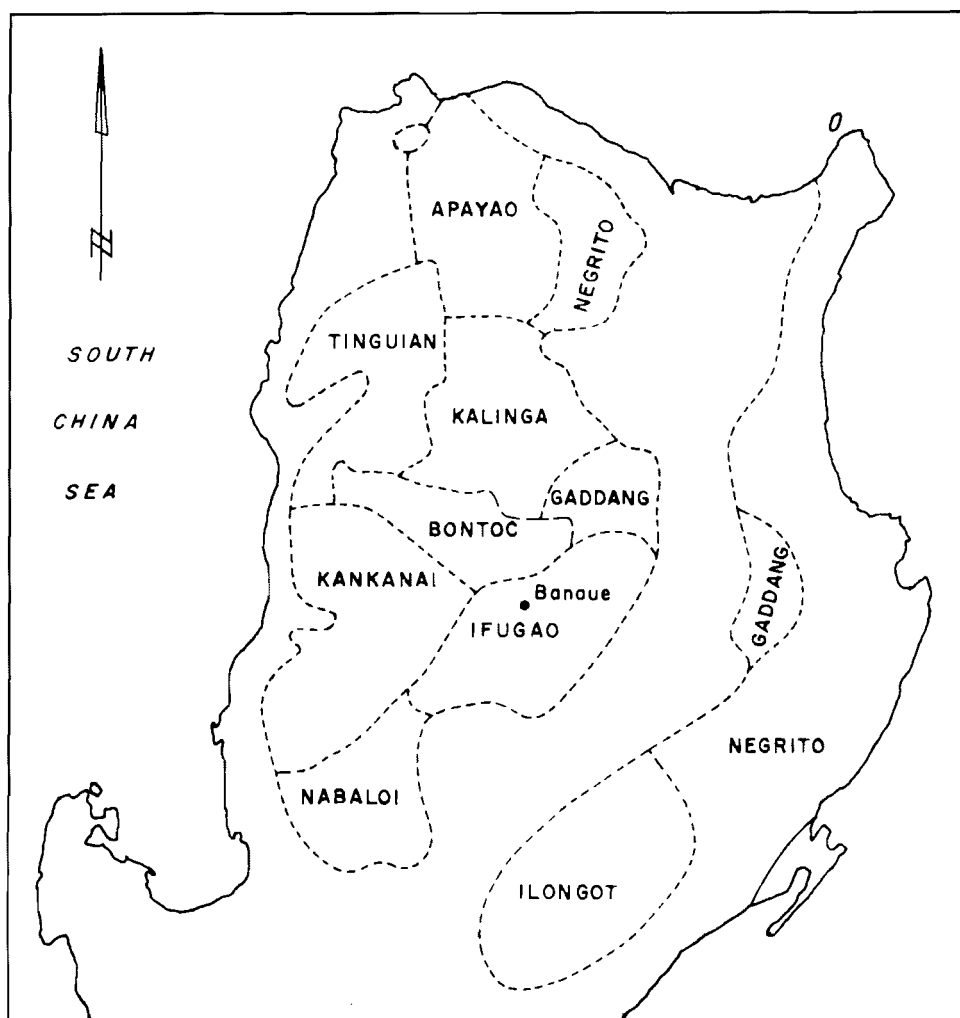


Fig. 1 Distribution of non-Christian ethnic territories in northern Luzon (modified from Barton 1919).

have been compounded by an Ilocano term, burnay, which refers to an unglazed jar but clearly has no connection with the correct name of the district. Conklin, in his excellent atlas of Ifugao, has in different places used both Bunne and Burnay (Conklin 1980). For better or for worse, the name Burnay now seems to be securely established on maps and documents. Since an attempt to avoid it would probably only disrupt communication, for the rest of this article Bunne is Burnay.

From the town of Banaue in the high valley of the Bannawol district to Banghallan village in the Burnay district there is a drop of approximately 1500 feet in elevation and a corresponding softening of the contours of the land. The conditions for agriculture become more favorable, with larger fields and a longer growing season. The challenge of terrace construction is not so great, with results that are more productive, if less impressive to the eye. The people of the Burnay district, particularly of Banghal-

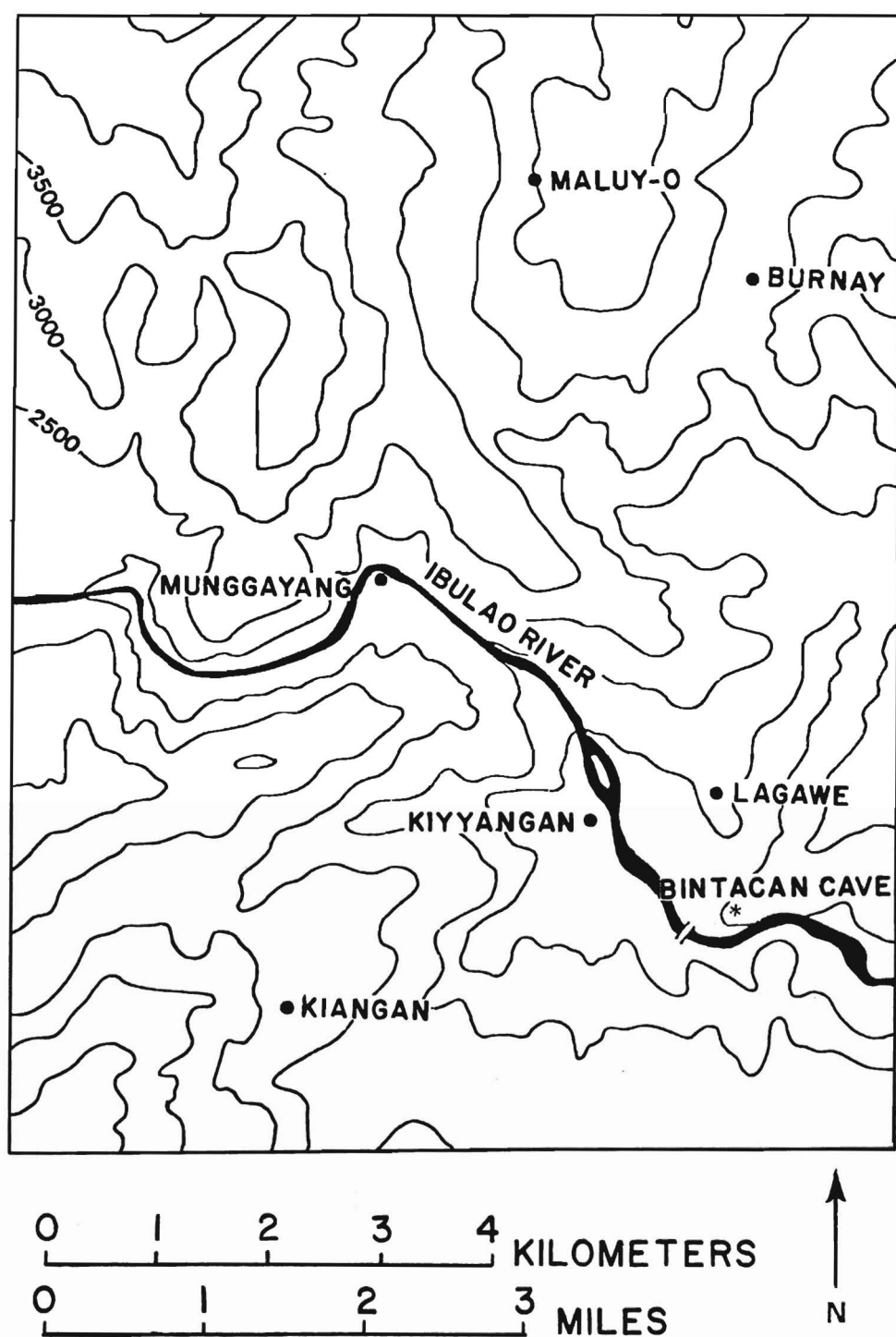


Fig. 2 An area of the Kiangang and Lagawe municipalities. Elevation is given in feet.

lan village, have the reputation of being wealthy and proud. They tend to deemphasize their roles as farmers and artisans in favor of being philosophers and one-time warriors. The latter role brought them to grief in a disastrous invasion of the Bannawol area, which I have described elsewhere (Maher 1975). More recently a native of the district, Mariano A. Dumia, has briefly reconstructed the conflict from stories passed down to him from relatives who participated and from a manuscript written by A. E. Jenks in 1902 (Dumia 1979). All versions agree upon the heavy losses suffered by the invading force.

Two villages, Banghallan and Boble (Fig. 3), which local inhabitants regard as the original villages of the district, were selected for our exploratory excavations, which were somewhat more limited than was originally planned. At Banghallan (If-20), which is clearly regarded as the leading village of the district, four 5-ft-square test pits were excavated in addition to two at Boble (If-21). All were dug in the midden material beyond the edge of the village house platforms. With no natural stratigraphy to follow, the excavations proceeded through 4-inch vertical levels to the bottom of the culture-bearing deposits, to an average depth of 24 inches. The deepest test square at Banghallan was 32 inches, and at Boble, 28 inches. All artifacts indicating modern culture contact, such as glass fragments, metal pieces of outside manufacture, and sherds of contemporary lowland trade jars, were restricted to the upper 8 inches in all test squares.

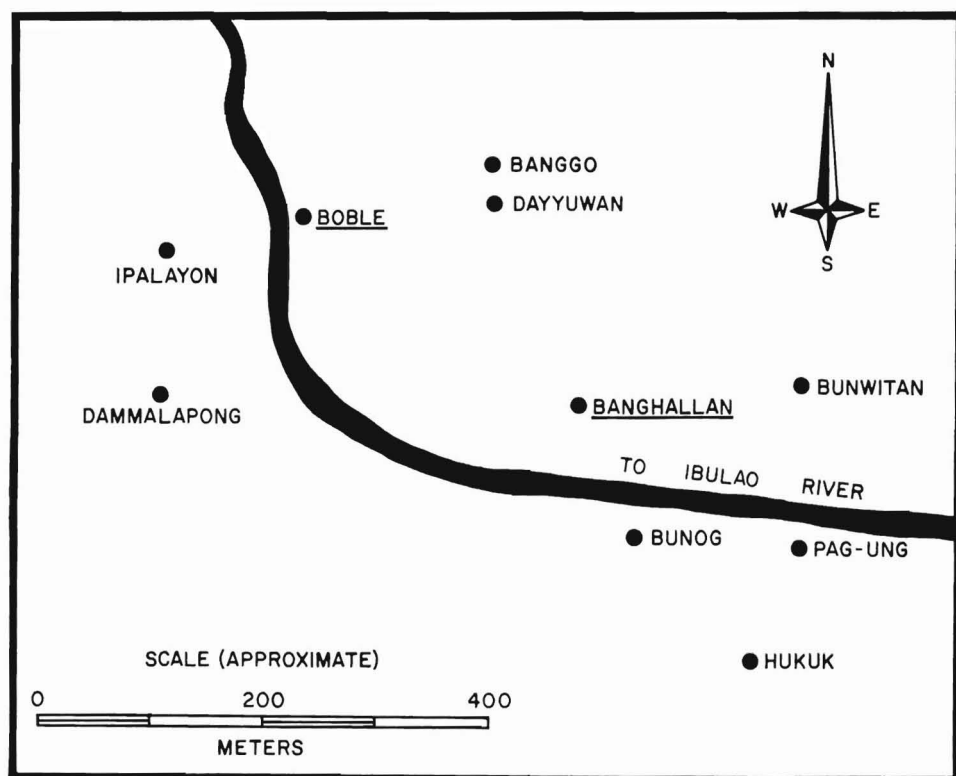


Fig. 3 Central Burnay.

STONE ARTIFACTS

The archaeologist excavating Ifugao habitation sites becomes accustomed to a paucity of stone artifacts. Between the use of metals and wood, little room has been left for artifacts of stone, which is most prominent as paving for house platforms and as part of terrace walls. Occasionally a mortar for rice pounding is made of stone. Even more rarely the prestige bench of southeastern Ifugao, the *hagabi*, is made of stone. Typically, however, stone artifacts are humble items. Unworked, waterworn stones from the river beds are used as hammerstones (*pohal* or *puhik*), sometimes with a wooden handle, to break up large rocks in the rice fields or for other similarly rough tasks. Others (*haitan*) are used as whetstones to sharpen iron tools. Smooth river stones used to grind pepper are called *ludih*. If used to crush betel nut, however, they would be called *tultul*. Some stones that are of an appropriate roughness (*igud*) are used for rubbing the body while bathing. Essentially a stone is chosen for a particular function according to its existing size, weight, and texture, rather than as a raw material from which a product will be manufactured. Another useful stone is the *banting* or firestone, used with iron to strike sparks for a fire. All I have seen are of chert or quartzite. Today the availability of metal hammers, whetstones, carborundum, and matches has substantially restricted an already rather narrow traditional use of stone.

As expected, excavations at Banghallan and Boble produced only a small quantity of stone artifacts, some of which were unusual for an Ifugao site. Three of the flakes pictured in Figure 4 are particularly interesting. Less so is the quartzite flake in the upper right, which shows the battering typical of firestones, and came from the upper level at Boble; in material and appearance it could be a mate to one found in the deepest level at Banghallan. The other three flakes have not been used as firestones. All are unifacials without secondary flaking and could have served well for cutting or scraping. It seems most probable that they found their way into the midden through human actions. All three are of chert and from Banghallan, distributed at depths of 7 to 30 inches. When I returned to Ifugao in 1978, I took the flakes back with me in an effort to learn more about them from local informants. The results were disappointing. The people had no difficulty in recognizing the quartzite flakes and identifying their function as firestones, as they had at other sites we had excavated around Banaue. But the unbattered chert flakes puzzled them. A man who has for years been a valued informant on matters concerning Ifugao traditional culture and, indeed, lives according to those traditions, completely failed to recognize the obvious chert flake in the upper left of Figure 4 as stone, and resisted the identification for some time after it had been given to him. Given this lack of experience with the material, it is not surprising that my attempts to obtain information on its probable uses were fruitless. It is possible the flakes are from a time when simple chert tools were used to cut and scrape as an occasional substitute for metal and bamboo. If so, however, Banghallan was virtually unique among 23 habitation sites excavated thus far in various parts of Ifugao.

At If-21 (Boble) three small stones were found which showed signs of wear suggesting human use. One, from a depth of 15 inches, is a fragment of dense sandstone, 25 mm × 8 mm × 8 mm, showing two smooth and polished surfaces. The other two are river pebbles, one 35 mm × 23 mm and the other 29 mm × 18 mm, each with some polished surface area. The larger was found at 10 inches and the smaller at 7 inches. Of the customary stone tools mentioned above, the *haiton* or whetstone comes to mind, but such simple abraders were not always so specialized. They could have been put to use on almost anything, such as a clay pot, that needed a bit of smoothing or polishing.

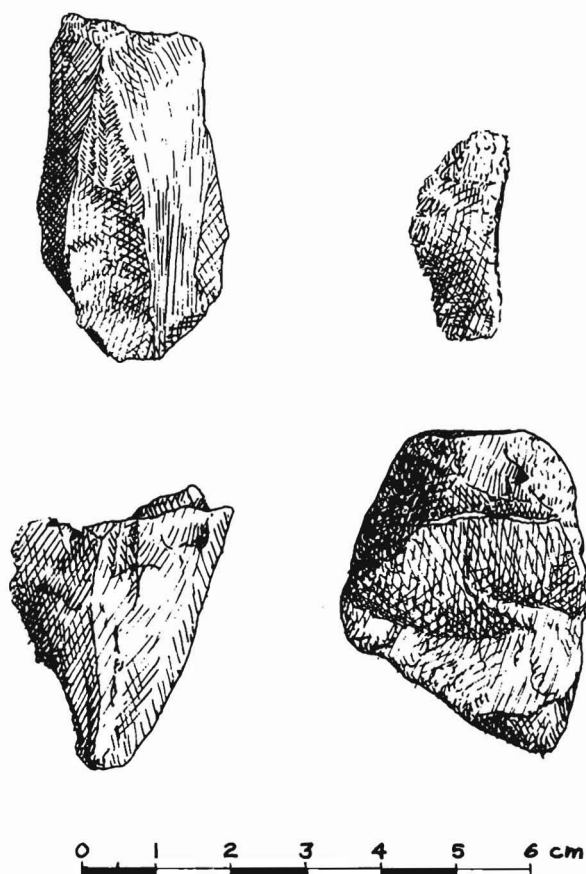


Fig. 4 Stone flakes from Burnay.

CERAMICS

Reports to date on Ifugao ceramics (Solheim and Schuler 1959; Maher 1973) indicate regional variation, some of it extraordinarily fundamental. Clearly there are at least two distinct pottery traditions, that of the male potters of north central and western Ifugao (e.g., Banaue, Hapao, and Hungduan) and of the female potters of eastern and southern Ifugao (e.g., Mayoyao and Kiangnan). The former manufactured their pots by coiling, while the latter used a paddle and anvil. A further variation that does not appear to align neatly with either of the two basic traditions is the distribution of the part-time specialists who practice the craft. The skill takes some time to accomplish and in no district or village has everyone chosen to be a potter, but in some districts one or a few villages had many potters. Mungayyang village of Kiangnan municipality, for example, had virtually monopolized local production and trade. In other areas, such as the districts around Banaue, potters were scattered through many villages and no community specialized in the craft.

The Burnay district lies between the area of the male potters of the high valleys around Banaue and that of the female potters of Mungayyang in the lower, relatively flat flood-

plain of the Ibulao River where it flows through Kiangnan municipality. However, nothing has been reported about the character of Burnay's ceramic traditions. Our excavations in 1976 produced a sample of Burnay ceramics over a substantial span of the past, and ethnographic inquiries begun that year and continued in 1978 obtained information about the craft as it was within living memory.

The most surprising outcome of the ethnographic investigation was the testimony of the people of the Burnay agricultural district that neither they nor their ancestors had made pottery. The few pots now in villages and the sherds our test excavations recovered at Banghallan and Boble were all acquired through trade. Indeed, the people of Banghallan regarded the practice of the potter's craft as beneath them. For as long as they can remember, they have obtained their pottery from villages outside, but adjacent to their district. Most important as suppliers were potters of the village of Maluy-o (Fig. 2) and, secondarily, those of Holnad, between 1 and 2 km east of Maluy-o. Because their land and water supply are less suitable for wet rice agriculture than central Burnay's, the people of these villages are poorer and are regarded as inferior, particularly by the inhabitants of Banghallan. Not only are the latter wealthier, but even a minor accomplishment on their part is seen as more significant than a major one on the part of a person of Maluy-o. For example, the sacrifice of a single pig by a Banghallan villager is equal in importance to the holding of a feast by an inhabitant of Maluy-o or Holnad—including the killing of a carabao and several pigs. These people, however, are not without advantages of their own. They are thought to have the ability to cast spells (*bungig*), not on people but on plants and animals, draining them of vitality and eventually killing them. The spell is not accomplished through a learned ritual, but is thought to be the consequence of an inherited psychic power. Those who possess this power are called *nanbungigan*. Not everyone in Maluy-o or Holnad has the power, but many do, and it is thought to have originated among them. Through intermarriage the power is believed to have spread rather spottily to other Ifugao communities. Currently, the effectiveness of the spells is considered to be in decline, but a person who is falsely accused of being a *nanbungigan* can successfully claim damages. As usual in Ifugao law (Barton 1919), the amount paid depends upon the injured person's social status. The higher it is the higher the damages.

As in north central Ifugao, the potters of Maluy-o and Holnad are male. They work with red clay found only in a few deposits (*timpig*), one of which is only about two hundred meters from Maluy-o. Even for such a short journey, omens must be considered. If their path is crossed by a red bird called *ido* (*icho* in Banaue), or a snake, or if the *ido* is heard to cry rapidly, the venture must be postponed. If, on the other hand, the red bird cries only three times, it is a sign that the trip will go well and the pots may be made without damage.

Once the clay (*luta*) is obtained it is wrapped in fresh banana leaves and carried to the village. The manufacturing process is begun by pounding the clay for about two hours on a large flat stone, using a smooth round stone or a wooden pestle of the sort used to prepare rice. The base of the pot is shaped within the contour of a round wooden bowl called *dalig* (*chuyu* in Banaue), the size of which varies according to the size desired for the pot. Above this the vessel is built by adding coils (*mullimulin*), with the length of each coil adjusted so that its beginning or ending is not aligned with that of any other coil. The rim is shaped from the final coil. After the pot has been formed, the potter thins and shapes it by pressing the inside with a smooth stone (*amad*) while matching the pressure on the exterior with his hand. Constructing and shaping one pot takes from two to three hours.

When it is finished it is placed upright on the rim of a broken pot called *haga-ang* to dry for an hour or more depending upon the available sunshine. Later it is scraped inside and out for about an hour with a piece of sharpened bamboo or a metal knife-blade (*kup-u* or *kohkoh* in Banaue). After drying in the sun for four or five days, the pot is brought into the house and placed above the hearth to be further hardened by the smoke and heat of the fire. This treatment lasts for about a week. Scott (Solheim and Shuler 1959:6) has reported from his informants that at this point a red clay slip, which fired to a dull red, was sometimes added to the inside of the mouth and partway down the outside. None of my informants in north central Ifugao, Maluy-o and Holnad, or Kiangan ever mentioned such a step. Even when asked directly about it, they professed ignorance. Yet the clay slip is there on some sherds recovered archaeologically in all of the areas. It is true that pottery making is a craft that in most parts of Ifugao exists only in memory. But it is curious that this part of memory was lost and yet other aspects of the manufacturing process recalled in detail. I will return to this subject in a later report on research in the Kiangan district. Slipped or not, the blackened pots are then ready for firing. The potter places his firewood, consisting of pieces about eighteen inches long and six in diameter, in a circle. The pots, usually five or six at a time, are placed mouth up in the center. Some of the smaller pieces of wood may touch the pots but they are kept clear of the greater part of the fuel. Once the fire is set, no additional people are allowed in the work area until the pots have been successfully taken from the fire. Otherwise, it is believed, the pots will be damaged. As a last step, the potter applies resin (*libuh*), if he has any, to the outside and inside of the pot, and it is now ready for use. Very seldom is any decoration attempted. Only one sherd, a straight rim from the second 4-inch level at Banghallan, had any at all. It had been crimped along the lip to give a scalloped effect. Figure 5 shows most of the decorated sherds out of thousands found in excavations in Ifugao from 1961 through 1976. The Banghallan sherd, *a*, is in the upper left. All of the others, except *c*, are from excavations in north central Ifugao. Sherd *b* is from the second level at the village of Ambalyo in the Bannawol district. Sherd *c* is not decorated but shows a portion of a broken handle. It is from the third level at Banghallan. Sherds *d*, *f*, and *g* are all from Partug village in the Puitan district near Banaue in north central Ifugao. They are from the sixth, second, and ninth levels, respectively. Sherd *e* was found in the fifth level at Gawwa, also in Puitan. One suspects that the holes drilled in sherd *g* were not intended to be decorative but were made to accommodate a length of twine or thong that could be used as a handle or to strengthen a cracked pot. In all, the collection emphasizes the plainness of Ifugao ware.

The ceramic tradition of Maluy-o and Holnad is virtually identical to that of north central Ifugao and quite distinct from that of the female potters of the Kiangan district. The manufacturing process differs only on minor points from that I have described for north central Ifugao (Maher 1973:59). There are some differences in terminology that reflect expectable dialect variation, and some in the process that may be more apparent than real and arise from imperfections in informants' memories and the anthropologist's mode of inquiry.

The basic similarity in the ceramics of the two regions carries over into such matters as pot forms, sizes, and nomenclature. As in north central Ifugao, there are two major pot forms. One is the cooking pot or *banga* (Maher 1973: Pl. IX), which ordinarily has a flared rim and no handle. It is also usually the smaller. The other is the water jar or *pannuman* (Maher 1973: Pl. X). It is distinguished by a rim that lacks flare to an extent that its neck rises vertically from its body, and by usually, although not always, having a handle. Both

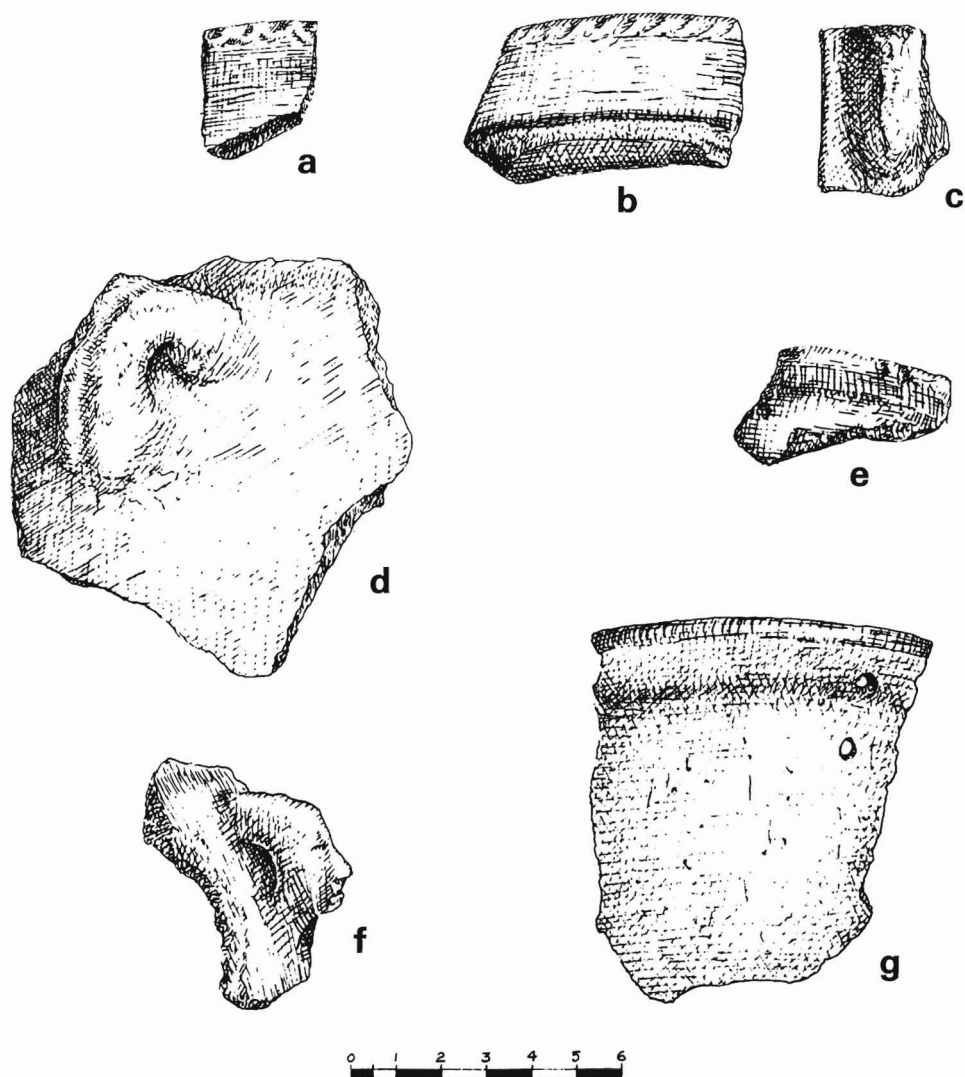


Fig. 5 Decorated Ifugao ware.

types are globular. There has been no evidence either from the past or the present, of the interesting animal effigy pot found in north central Ifugao (Maher 1973:Pl. XI).

The excavations at Banghallan (If-20) produced a total of 544 sherds, including 43 rim sherds. Of these, 10 had flared rims and 24 straight. The remaining 9 were not large enough to be characterized. During the smaller excavations at Boble (If-21), 166 sherds were found. Only 6 of these were rim sherds, however, 1 being flared, 4 straight, and 1 unidentified. Pottery was found at all levels of all excavations at both sites. The rim-type frequencies at Banghallan are similar to those from excavations in north central Ifugao, where 660 sherds were recovered from sites If-1, If-2, and If-3. As Table 1 shows, the numbers are small but the patterns are noticeably similar.

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF RIM TYPE FREQUENCIES OF SHERDS FROM NORTH CENTRAL IFUGAO WITH THOSE FROM BANGHALLAN OF THE BURNAY DISTRICT

RIM TYPE	NORTH CENTRAL IFUGAO		BANGHALLAN	
	N	% OF TOTAL (660)	N	% OF TOTAL (544)
Flared	12	.018	10	.018
Straight	39	.059	24	.044
Unidentified	5	.007	9	.017
Total rim-type sherds	56	.084	43	.079

The number of straight rims is substantially greater than that of flared. While it should not be taken that the water-versus-cooking-vessel identification would bear out in each case, since the correlation is by no means perfect, there is a strong indication that most vessels were used for water rather than cooking. This can no longer be verified ethnographically since the potter's craft is virtually dead in Ifugao, and certainly any current census of ceramics would be different from one when the old pot-making traditions still held. I suspect, however, that the frequency of the rim types shown in Table 1 at least roughly expresses a difference in the frequency of the vessel type that was due to differences in function. Not as many vessels were needed to cook the family's meal as to carry water for the household, and the cooking pot could sit securely on the hearth without being exposed to the same hazards of breakage that imperiled a water vessel regularly transported around and outside the village.

As in the north central region, pot size is designated according to how many bundles of rice can be cooked in a pot at one time. The categories are one-, two-, three-, and five-bundle pots. The names for these in Maluy-o and Holnad are the same as for those in north central Ifugao, except the five-bundle pot is called *mahinhonglan* rather than *maliman*. Both areas also produce a much larger pot, capable of cooking ten or more bundles of rice as food for pigs. Here the respective names show a divergence of dialect, being *punhorchan* in north central Ifugao and *punholdan* or *punholodan* in Maluy-o and Holnad.

The nomenclature of the pot itself is also very similar in the two areas. The names for rim, neck, sides, handle, and body (Maher 1973:60) are identical. The only departure is one of pronunciation, in which the Banaue area people call the base of the pot *chopona*, while those from Maluy-o and Holnad say *dopona*.

The concentration of pottery making in a few villages in the region neighboring the Burnay district and its absence from the district itself was a situation made possible by trade. In turn, pottery must have inspired some of the activities of trade. Traditionally, all was barter, with the Maluy-o or Holnad potter exchanging his products for rice, chickens, pork, or carabao meat as his needs and the market directed. A carabao leg was said to be worth five pots of different sizes. Later, money sometimes entered into the transaction. Before World War II, pots were sold according to size for ten to twenty centavos. By 1960 the price had soared a hundredfold to ten to twenty pesos. These prices do not correspond with those I recorded for north central Ifugao in 1961 (Maher 1973:58). Those were reported as ranging from two pesos for a small pot to five for a large water jar. If the difference is due to error, I would trust the prices from the north central region, since they were recorded at the time while those from Burnay have been recollected more than fifteen

years after the fact. I have, however, learned to respect Ifugao memory and am inclined toward a different explanation than error. It is not unlikely that the Burnay villages were faced with the economic reality that imported goods tend to cost more than those manufactured domestically, particularly if the imported goods are regarded as necessities and the ability or inclination to produce them locally is absent.

The pottery trade seems to have been primarily concerned with economic objectives. No established trading partners or rituals were specifically associated with the enterprise. A transaction might be initiated by either the potter or his customer, according to the needs of the moment. The one great restriction was that the trade should be limited to areas that were reliably at peace with one another. This meant that the Maluy-o and Holnad potters traded beyond the Burnay district, even further to the south in the Bana'aw district and to Ano and Hengyon to the northwest. The area involved was some twenty to thirty square kilometers of mountainous terrain.

OTHER ARTIFACTS

In the top two 4-inch levels at both sites, we found, as expected, evidence of contact with the modern lowland economy. The quantity, however, was not abundant, due perhaps to good house-keeping, or rather, yard-keeping habits. For example, each site yielded only nine fragments of bottle glass, that almost indestructible material. All of the metal objects recovered were from these levels, and all, with the exception of a fragment of iron knife-blade and a brass pendant from Banghallan, are the products of modern contacts of one sort or another. Aside from three empty rifle cartridges, the rest of the metal artifacts consist of seven nails or spikes and five iron fragments too small to identify. The most interesting piece is the brass pendant (Fig. 6), which is of the sort that is commonly suspended by a chain below the bowl of a brass pipe. It was found at a depth of 20 inches.

Also pictured in Figure 6 is a pig tusk that has been shaped by a smooth cut along one side near the point. Such tusks are used in a number of ways as ornaments. Sometimes a pair will be set by fiber lashings and pitch to project from near the top end of a walking staff or a spear, or one or more of them may be worn around the neck as a pendant. However, the nature of the alteration on this tusk suggests that it was joined by fiber ties to another to form a roughly circular armlet called *tang-ar*.

ANIMAL AND PLANT REMAINS

Teeth constitute much of the faunal evidence, along with a few unidentifiable fragments of burned bone. Their vertical distribution showed an unexplained contrast between Banghallan and Boble. At the former, specimens were present at all levels, while at the latter they were found only in the top two 4-inch levels. Most common at both sites were land-snail shells, a total of 26, all of the genus *cochlostyla*. It is likely that more than one species is present but identification has not been carried to that level.

Including the worked tusk already mentioned, a total of 15 pig teeth were found, mostly molars. In addition, 6 carabao and 3 dog teeth were excavated. The latter, consisting of 2 canines and 1 molar, all from Banghallan, were from below the levels containing evidence of modern contact. The deepest, one of the canines, was found in a level dated by radiocarbon as well before the Spanish presence. The teeth raise a question without settling it. In north central Ifugao, I have been told many times that the eating of dog is a

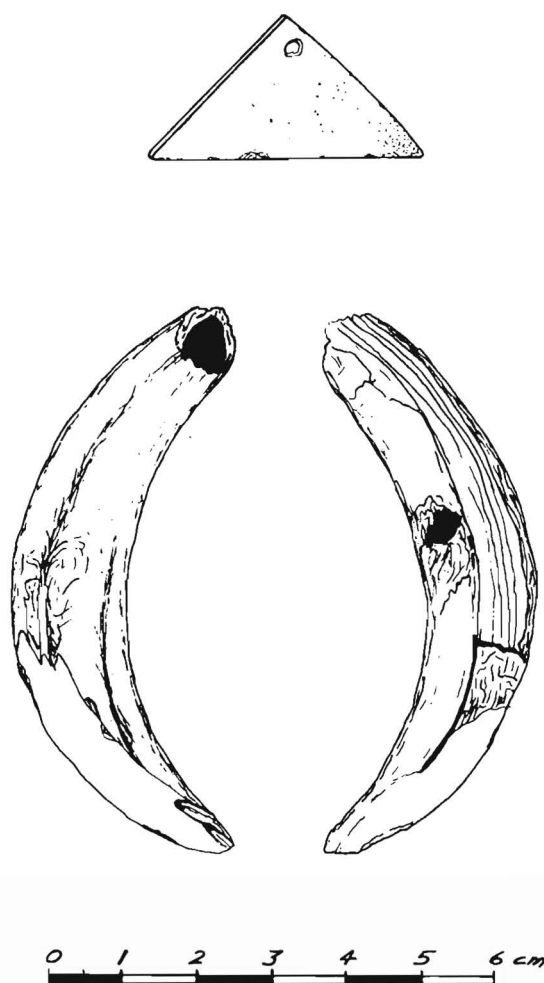


Fig. 6 Brass pendant and a worked pig tusk from Banghallan.

recent custom, brought to Ifugao from Benguet by Hapao valley woodcarvers, who had spent time in Baguio carving items for the tourist trade. While recognizing the sincerity of my informants, I have wondered at the avoidance of such an obvious source for so long by the meat-hungry Ifugao. The dog teeth in a Banghallan midden show nothing to indicate that they got there by any other way than the more abundant pig and carabao teeth—from animals that were presumably eaten. I have come across the unbutchered corpse of a newly buried dog in midden deposits at a site in the Amganad district of north central Ifugao, but the Banghallan teeth show no indication of being part of such articulated remains.

Plant materials are represented mainly by charcoal and a few unidentified fragments of unburned wood. The most interesting specimen is a piece of what appears to be liana, which comes from the deepest level in the excavations at Banghallan, directly beneath the level on which one of the radiocarbon dates was obtained. Unfortunately, the liana, which one suspects was used as a lashing, perhaps for a house or fence, is too small to be dated.

RADIOCARBON DATES

Organic specimens of a size suitable for radiocarbon analysis were not plentiful in the basal levels of the excavations. No datable samples were obtained from Boble (If-21) and only two from Banghallan (If-20). One of these was processed at Gakushuin University and the other at the University of Georgia's Geochronology Laboratory. Both samples were small and produced a rather large sigma. One (GaK-6442) returned an age of 890 ± 310 B.P. or A.D. 1060 ± 310 . It came from the next to the deepest 4-inch level in its 5-ft square. The liana was found in the level below it at a depth of 30 inches. The other date (UGA-1541), from the basal level of another square at Banghallan, is 1340 ± 375 B.P. or A.D. 610 ± 375 .

These dates, from samples selected to give evidence on the beginnings of sedentary village settlement in the Burnay district, are much like those on similarly selected samples from north central Ifugao. Those of the latter so far published (Maher 1973) are four dates on two sites (If-1 and If-2) in the Nabyuan district and one from a site (If-3) on the Alimit River just below the town of Banaue. I have suggested that it is reasonable to postulate that the older settlements in any Ifugao district would be those in places with the most convenient access to a reliable water supply. The If-3 site could not have been closer to the main water source in Bannawol valley than it is, and the date (GX2183) obtained on it, 2950 ± 250 B.P., is the oldest received thus far. The Nabyun district site, If-1, revealed some interesting stratigraphy but proved to be a rather late occupation, with a date of 205 ± 100 (GX0668) from a stratum laid down at about the time the site was being prepared for habitation. One of the dates from neighboring If-2, taken from excavations into the house platform, is also relatively recent, 325 ± 110 B.P. (GX1900). But the two from the associated midden are well before Spanish contact, being 695 ± 100 B.P. (GX1901) and 735 ± 105 B.P. (GX2184). It would seem to me that when the Banghallan dates are added to these the conclusion is inescapable that the Keesing (1962) and Lambrecht (1967) view that the Ifugao moved into their present territory under pressure from the Spanish is not supported. They were clearly in place much earlier than that.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite a history of enmity, Burnay pottery, or rather, that of Malay-o and Holnad, is obviously of a similar kind to that of the districts of north central Ifugao. In both, pottery manufacture is viewed as a male activity in which the pot is built up with coils. Differences between the two are in details only and together they contrast sharply with the ceramic tradition of the Kiangan area. Both produce but a few simple shapes, distinguished mainly by function, and efforts at decoration are rare. Remarkably, in both Burnay and north central Ifugao the ceramic tradition that was present at the time of settlement continued essentially without change until contact with the modern world began the process of replacement with metal pots. The time span indicated by the present evidence is between three thousand and fifteen hundred years. If the Ifugao ceramic tradition does little for the creativity of Ifugao culture, it does reflect its stability.

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